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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 004777

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [OREP](#) [PK](#) [IN](#) [IR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: SENATORS FRIST AND MARTINEZ MEET WITH PRESIDENT  
KARZAI

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard B. Norland for Reasons 1.  
4 (B) AND (D)

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Summary  
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11. (C) President Karzai hosted an Iftar dinner in honor of Senators Bill Frist and Mel Martinez, at the end of their October 2 visit to Afghanistan. Karzai used the dinner to express deep appreciation for U.S. support for Afghanistan, and particularly for the President's efforts to encourage President Musharraf to work as a partner with Afghanistan in combating terrorism. Karzai welcomed COMISAF LTG Richard's assessment that the security situation in the South is stabilizing, but reiterated that progress will require sustained and deepened engagement by the U.S. and NATO. He characterized Iran's role in Afghanistan as generally good -- but "careful" so as to not make trouble with Washington. In Karzai's view, Ahmadinejad wants to resume a regular dialogue with the U.S., but does not know how. Karzai valued Indian assistance at \$700 million, but underlined that Pakistan does not allow for the transit of Indian goods. The Senators assured Karzai of the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan. End Summary.

12. (C) Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) visited Afghanistan on October 2. Their visit included a trip to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Qalat in Zabul province, where the Senators were briefed on PRT operations and visited with troops from their home states. It ended with an Iftar dinner with President Karzai. The dinner was also attended by NATO Sr. Civilian Representative Daan Everts; COMISAF LTG Richards; DCG CFC-A MG Wilson; DCG for PolMil Affairs CFC-A BG Chambers; CG

CSTC-A MG Durbin, and Charge Norland. Afghans in attendance included Defense Minister Wardak, NSA Rassul, Senior Economic Advisor Naderi, and Deputy ForMin Aziz. Karzai and the Senators used the dinner to review Karzai's recent visit to Washington; Afghanistan's security situation; and Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan, Iran and India.

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Afghanistan-Pakistan: Making the Most of an Opportunity  
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¶3. (C) Karzai began the conversation with the Senators by expressing deep appreciation to President Bush for hosting the joint meeting with Karzai and President Musharraf in Washington. It was especially important, Karzai said, that the President made it clear that both Afghanistan and Pakistan are important U.S. allies and that it is vital to U.S. interests that Afghanistan succeed. Karzai said he had encouraged Musharraf to see Western involvement in the region as an opportunity to deepen relations with Afghanistan, warning that if Afghanistan fails, Pakistan will have many enemies. According to Karzai, Musharraf had apologized for harsh public rhetoric critical of Karzai and had acknowledged cross-border activity and support for the insurgency within Pakistan. When Karzai had challenged Musharraf's claim that the Taliban represents the local population, the Pakistani leader had modified his claim to say the Taliban controls (by means of terror) the population.

¶4. (C) According to Karzai, after lengthy discussions, the two leaders had been able to agree on the importance of initiatives to support civil society in the border regions -- in order to bring a new culture to the tribes and help deal with tribal problems. The Afghan president was pleased Musharraf had agreed to participate in jirgas organized on both sides of the border, as this would allow Musharraf to

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hear voices he does not usually hear. Karzai said he personally regularly receives delegations from both sides of the border, as the 13 million Pashtu living in the region consider Kabul as the traditional regional capital. Karzai said he had stressed to Musharraf that the Afghan people are growing impatient and the jirgas represented an opportunity to cool down the anger. That being said, Karzai noted that when he had reported on the plan to his National Security Council (on September 30), their response had been cool. They had said "show us results -- that the bombing and killings and terrorism will stop."

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The Internal Security Situation  
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¶5. (C) Karzai asked LTG Richards for his assessment of the security situation in the South. The General reported that the Taliban had been hit very, very hard in Panjwai and Zharay, and that, as a result, things are much more stable. Without going into details, LTG Richards said the situation is looking better also in Helmand. It should be possible to bring things together over the next three to six months, but the next 60 days will be critical. He agreed with Karzai's assessment that the patience of the Afghan people is wearing thin, and underlined the importance of the resources needed to ensure security being made available. Citing U.S. proposals for Afghan National Security Force modernizations, Richards said "we must spend it now to save later."

¶6. (C) Karzai returned to the theme of cross-border violence. He reported that, while he was in Washington, an individual in possession of bombs had been arrested in Kabul. Calls from a Peshawar number came into the detainee's cell phone after his arrest. According to Karzai, the callers were asking why the bombs had not gone off yet.

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Iran: Helpful but Careful

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¶17. (C) Asked about Afghan-Iranian relations, Karzai described Iran's role as "generally good, but careful." He said Teheran "has tried to play in a way that does not make trouble with the U.S." He commented that, while this remains true, the new Iranian government is different than the former. It is not as subtle. According to Karzai, this has both international and domestic implications. Ahmadinejad is liked for his defense of Iranian interests, but his "harsh rhetoric" does not go down well with Iran's sophisticated and cultured population. Karzai highlighted the relative freedom enjoyed by Iranian women.

¶18. (C) Karzai reported he meets regularly with Ahmadinejad, most recently in New York during UNGA. When he had asked Ahmadinejad why he was not more friendly to the U.S., the response had been that Iran wanted to work with the U.S.; it had been the U.S. that had broken things off. Karzai's assessment was that Teheran wants to resume a regular dialogue, but it doesn't know how to go about it. Karzai had advised Ahmadinejad that he should be happy with what the U.S. has done in Iraq by destroying an enemy. The answer had been that Iran is happy -- but because it considers itself the winner in terms of Iraq.

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India: Helpful without Help from Pakistan

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¶19. (C) Invited to comment on Afghanistan's relations with India, Karzai said they were good -- adding that this

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contributes to problems with Pakistan. He noted that Pakistan does not allow Indian goods to transit and cross the border to Afghanistan. India has, however, provided \$700 million in assistance which has been used to rebuild the parliament and for roads, schools and scholarships.

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Looking ahead: Finding an Alternative to Radicalism

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¶10. (C) Looking ahead, Karzai said he will continue to try to impress on Musharraf that it is in Pakistan's interest to use Western engagement in the region to deepen relations with Afghanistan. It is not in Pakistan's interest to have Afghanistan fail. If Pakistan was understood to contribute to that outcome, it would have many enemies in the region and beyond. Karzai observed that, in some cases, radicals have been used as an instrument of national policy, adding that, "unless it stops, everyone will suffer."

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Appreciation for U.S. Support

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¶12. (C) Karzai reiterated his deep appreciation for the support Afghanistan is receiving from the U.S. While he had sensed no Afghanistan fatigue during his visit to the U.S., he needed to emphasize that success in taking Afghanistan forward will be possible only with stronger engagement by the U.S. and NATO/ISAF. He was grateful that the President had assured him that the U.S. is "here to stay," and had been receptive to appeals for more support for the police. Karzai said his vision for Afghanistan is that it be allowed to become "a peaceful, struggling, poor country -- free of terrorism -- that is a good member of the international community." He added that, for the short-run, he would be very grateful simply for more rain to ease the current drought the country is suffering.

¶13. (C) Senator Frist assured President Karzai that all of America -- not just Congress -- is committed to Afghanistan

and has great respect for Karzai's leadership. Senator Martinez agreed, adding that Americans hold President Karzai in high regard. Karzai responded "yes, I think they like me."

¶14. (U) Senator Frist and Senator Martinez departed Afghanistan immediately after the dinner and were unable to clear this cable.

NORLAND